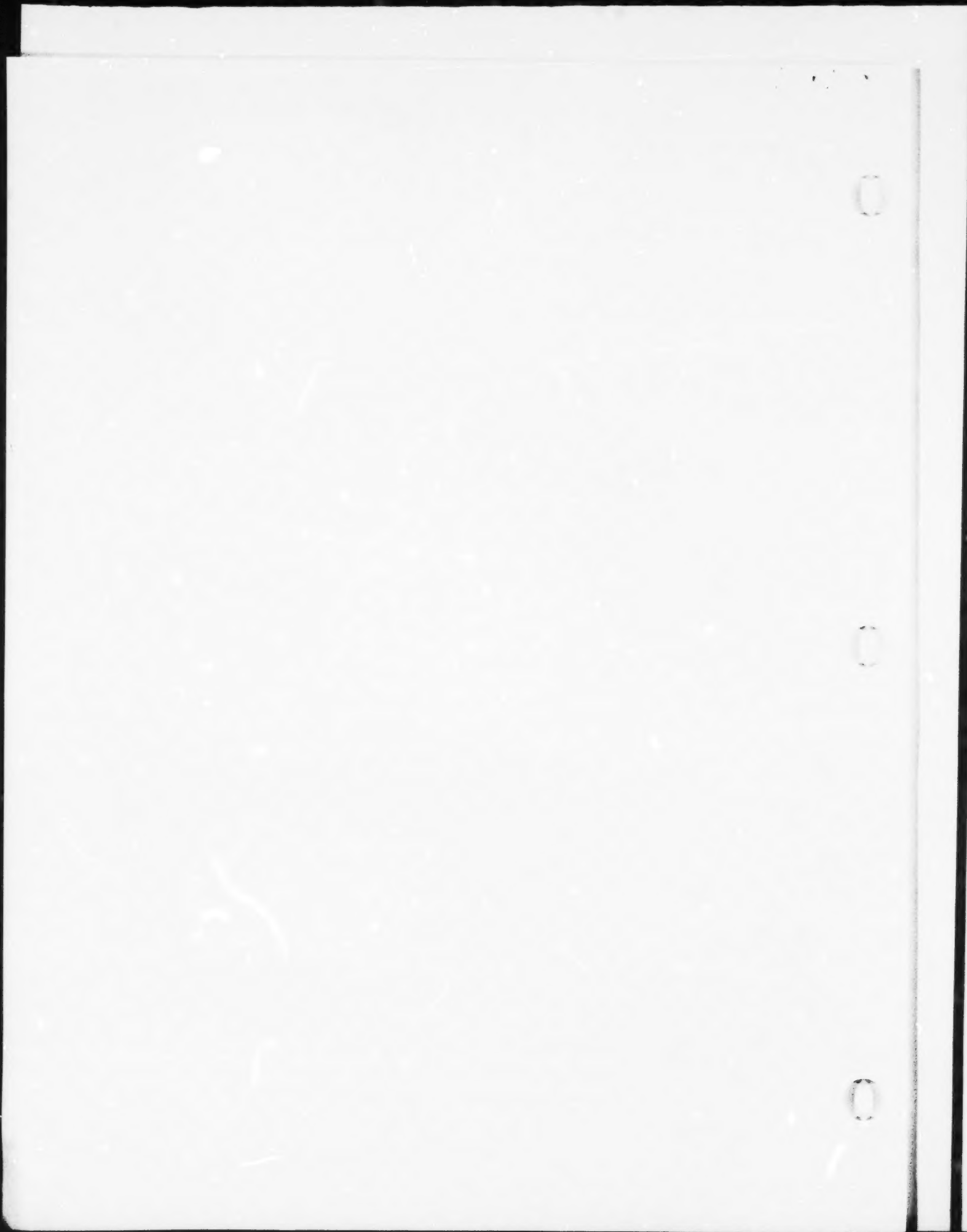


**GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA**

## **RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY**

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## FOREWORD

Under the authority of the Public Records Committee, and in accordance with the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services Act and Public Records Regulation, this publication sets down Government of Alberta policy on public records management.

Policies herein are stated in bold print, and in most cases are accompanied by rationale and guidelines.



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## 1. POLICY SCOPE

### Application

Public records, as defined in the Public Records Regulation of the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services Act, means all documents, parchments, manuscripts, books, maps, records, plans, photographs, machine readable records or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form, owned by and in the possession of a department.

**All public records are the property of the Crown in right of Alberta. Responsibility for records custody is vested in the departments, agencies, boards and commissions (hereinafter called departments). Custody and control are transferred to the Provincial Archives of Alberta upon the transfer of records to the Provincial Archives.**

The Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services is responsible for the preparation and implementation of a public records management program within the Government of Alberta. Authority is delegated to the Records Management Branch through the Deputy Minister and in turn through the Assistant Deputy Minister, Supply Management, who is also the Chairman of the Public Records Committee. The Public Records Committee is the body responsible for establishing disposition schedules, procedures and directives governing records management.

### Authorities

1. Department of Public Works, Supply and Services Act, Chapter D-25.5 1983. (Appendix I)
2. Public Records Regulation, Alberta Regulation 373/83. (Appendix II)
3. The Alberta Historical Resources Act, R.S.A. 1980, C. H-8, S.9H, S.10.

The above, along with other Government of Alberta records management publications, are listed in the bibliography.

## Responsibilities

### 1. The Records Management Branch

The Records Management Branch administers the public records management program in respect to the following:

1. The development and implementation of records management policy.
2. The administration of records centres throughout Alberta which store, service and dispose of the inactive records of Government departments.
3. The development and administration of a records management training program for Government staff.
4. The dissemination of records management information to Government departments, and the development of standards for records management.
5. The auditing of the public records management program to determine compliance with records management policies, directives and Request for Records Disposition Authority schedules.

### 2. The Provincial Archives of Alberta

The role of the Provincial Archives is to identify, appraise, select, preserve, arrange and describe, and make available for research and reference non-current public records of enduring value approved for transfer to the Provincial Archives by the Public Records Committee. Custody of records is transferred from the depositing department to the Provincial Archives, while ownership continues to be vested in the Crown in right of Alberta. Public records in the Provincial Archives are deemed available for public and government research once they have been transferred, unless access restrictions have been specified in the approved Request for Records Disposition Authority.

### 3. The Public Records Committee (PRC)

The Public Records Committee operates under the authority of the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services Act. The Committee is empowered to establish disposition schedules, procedures and directives governing

1. the handling, control, organization, retention, maintenance, preservation, disposition, alienation, and destruction of public records.
2. access to public records.

3. the destruction of a public record that is no longer required for any purpose.

4. The Department

1. The Public Records Officer (PRO)

**Each department of the Government of Alberta shall designate a public records officer to be responsible for the records management function of the department.**

A major responsibility of the departmental public records officer is to establish and implement a departmental records scheduling and disposal program. The public records officer is accountable through the respective deputy head for compliance with records management policy, directives and disposition authorities.

The PRO directs the public records management program, seeks the support of senior management and encourages the cooperation of other personnel in their daily handling of records.

To facilitate compliance with records management policy and to meet the operating requirements of departments, it is essential that records management staff have clear and complete position descriptions, possess the necessary qualifications for the positions they hold and receive proper training and guidance.

Official notification of new public records officer appointments are sent by the deputy minister of a department or head of a Government agency to the Chairman of the Public Records Committee.

2. The Public Records Officers' Advisory Council (PROAC)

The Public Records Officers' Advisory Council is a voluntary body which acts as a forum for the exchange of information. It may be asked to participate in an advisory capacity in matters pertaining to the development of the public records management program. Membership consists of public records officers.



## 2. THE RECORDS MANAGEMENT FUNCTION

**"Public records management program" means an inter-departmental program instituted to provide efficient handling of public records by establishing controls for the organization, maintenance and disposition of public records.**

Records management is defined as the systematic control of all public records (page 1), from creation through maintenance to final disposition.

The records management function has four main objectives:

1. Minimizing the cost of managing Government records.
2. Providing maximum service to users.
3. Assisting the Provincial Archives in preserving historically valuable records.
4. Providing security for Government information.

The management of the records program as a whole is the responsibility of the public records officer, who

1. ensures that the design of the records system, the choice of equipment and the use of resources and space are as cost effective as possible.
2. establishes, documents and implements departmental records management practices and procedures. The most important of these is a records classification system for retrieval, and to facilitate the scheduling and disposal of records.
3. acquires competent staff and supplements their expertise with training, where necessary.
4. automates in a cost-beneficial manner any aspect of the records management function where to do so supports the work of the department and helps achieve the objectives of this policy.
5. manages special categories of records, such as those of ministers' offices.
6. uses the Alberta Records Centre to store, service and dispose of inactive records.

7. cooperates with the emergency planning officer in the establishment and maintenance of the department's essential records so as to ensure their availability in the event of any emergency.
8. fosters cooperation between records management personnel and other staff to facilitate the most effective management of departmental records.
9. consults with the Records Management Branch and the Provincial Archives when records management advice is required.
10. evaluates the effectiveness of the program on a regular basis.

**Each department shall develop and maintain records management procedures which support and meet the operating requirements of the department.**

The objectives of the public records management program can be best achieved if the function receives both a strong commitment from senior management and the necessary resources. The program limits demand for resources by promoting economy and by requiring only necessary activities.

### 3. RECORDS CLASSIFICATION AND RETRIEVAL

#### Classification

**Each Government department shall prepare and maintain a records inventory, and shall establish and maintain a records classification system(s) covering all the public records of the department.**

Such a records classification system is a logical arrangement of files, organized to reflect the programs and functions of the department.

**Each Government department shall incorporate its most current records in its records classification system(s) manual in a timely manner.**

#### Retrieval

**Each Government department shall have an effective means to retrieve records.**

Such means include reference manuals, processing forms and suitable modes of internal and external transfer.

**Each Government department shall establish and maintain effective indexes to its records classification system.**

These indexes may be alphabetic or numeric, and should contain sufficient detail to ensure that information in records can be made available as required in order to support management decision making and program delivery.



#### **4. RECORDS STORAGE AND SECURITY**

**Each Government department shall protect its records from deterioration and loss, and unauthorized access, disclosure, removal and destruction.**

Although the records belonging to a system may vary in form, and be used and stored in various locations, it is essential that records management staff be aware of their existence and location.



## 5. RECORDS SCHEDULING AND DISPOSAL

### Scheduling

**Each Government department shall develop Records Disposition Authority schedules for its operational records, and for its administrative records if it has not received permission to use the Administrative Records Disposition Authority (ARDA). Each department shall obtain the approval of the Public Records Committee for all schedules.**

These schedules should be reviewed at least once every five years to determine whether amendments are required, with the proposed changes subject to the approval of the Public Records Committee.

All records must be assigned definite retention periods. Transfer to the Archives as a final disposition is appropriate only for public records of enduring value. Permanent retention in a department is usually valid only for those public records so designated by legislation. The final disposition "Archives" means that the records will be transferred in their entirety. When selective retention in Archives is the final disposition, it means records are preserved by the Archives on a selective retention basis, and that those records not selected by the Archives are destroyed.

Most schedules will periodically require some changes, such as the shortening, or occasionally the lengthening, of existing retention periods. New items and subjects require a new Request for Records Disposition Authority.

**Each department shall preserve permanently a master set of its disposition authorities, including documentation on the final disposition of its public records.**

### Disposal

**Each Government department shall dispose of its records in accordance with schedules approved by the Public Records Committee and shall not otherwise destroy records or permit their removal from the control of the Government.**

**Each Government department shall transfer its archival records to the control of the Provincial Archives in accordance with schedules approved by the Public Records Committee.**

**When transferring master microform or machine-readable records to the Records Management Branch or Provincial Archives of Alberta, departments shall include any supporting documentation, or indexes if required.**

**It is incumbent upon the public records officer to authorize the destruction of the department's public records, as approved by the Public Records Committee, and to report unauthorized destruction to the Public Records Committee.**

## 6. DISASTER CONTINGENCY PLANNING

**Each Government department shall identify its essential records and shall store and regularly update a set of these records at secure sites administered by the Records Management Branch, PWSS.**

The set of essential records required by this policy may comprise any combination of copies, synopses or extracts, and any type of media used for the storage of information.

Each department should have in place a disaster contingency plan for records management, including a list of contacts during and after a disaster.



## 7. SPECIAL CATEGORIES

### Ministers' Offices

Each minister's office may consider transferring its records to the Provincial Archives in accordance with an agreement between the minister and the Provincial Archives.

Ministerial files (private papers), which are the private property of the minister, are vital to the historic record of the provincial government. When a minister leaves a portfolio or the Legislative Assembly, the Provincial Archives seeks the minister's written consent to deposit his private papers with the Archives. All conditions, including restricted access and selective retention, must be stipulated. The public records officer may not always be involved in these transactions.

### Defunct Departments and Operations

**Records of any defunct Government department and of any operation terminated by any Government department shall be scheduled.**

**The public records officer of a department which terminates an operation or finds records of a defunct operation shall take any necessary records scheduling or disposal action.**

**In cases where another Government department assumes responsibility for the defunct department or terminated operation, control over the records concerned is vested in the department assuming such responsibility.**

### Transfers to the Private Sector

**Where any Government department or part thereof is transferred to the private sector, the agreement of transfer shall specify, with the concurrence of the Public Records Committee, the records which are to remain public records and their final disposition.**

Adherence to this directive requires that records management staff of the department involved carry out any necessary records scheduling activity and records disposal action respecting these records. A Request for Records Disposition Authority form is the vehicle used to obtain concurrence from the Public Records Committee.

## Records of Contracts, Grants and Contributions

The terms of contracts, grants and contributions should specify which records made and received in fulfillment of contracts and as a result of grants and contributions should be submitted by the contractor or recipient of the grant or contribution to the responsible Government department.

Records submitted in accordance with this directive to the responsible Government department should be kept intact within the records classification system unless the department deems it necessary to do otherwise in order to meet its operating requirements.

## Personnel Records

**Personnel records of former employees of Government departments shall be transferred to the control of the Records Management Branch in accordance with the Personnel Administration Office directive.**

Such personnel records are to be transferred to the Records Management Branch Personnel Records Area for control, classification, storage, protection, service and disposal in accordance with the Personnel Administration Office directive. In order to maintain confidentiality, access is granted only to personnel directors and their designates.

## Publications

**The final draft of any record prepared for duplication and distribution shall be considered an original record and shall be scheduled accordingly.**

Publications and imprints created or received by a department may be disposed of according to procedures outlined in the Records Disposition Process in the Government of Alberta (PWSS 140). The Provincial Archives receives deposit copies of all materials published by the Queen's Printer, but may wish to acquire certain other publications or imprints, and should be informed of final disposition through normal procedures.

## **8. COOPERATION WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT**

Each public records officer should actively seek the cooperation of all employees who create, receive, handle and use records in the course of their work to ensure an efficient records management program.

Cooperation is necessary between the public records officer and

1. the EDP manager, concerning the management of records in machine readable form.
2. other technical specialists, to ensure that all records they generate in various physical media are covered in the record file classification system and scheduled. These specialists include map makers, draftspeople, and personnel in computer operations centres, tape libraries, word processing services, microfilm operations, photo laboratories and services, graphics units and audio-visual units.
3. the emergency planning officer, regarding the management of essential records.
4. program officials, regarding the establishment of a subject file classification system, and access restrictions on records and personal information to which access may be requested.
5. clerical and general staff, to facilitate the flow of records to and from officials and the observance of records management procedures.
6. the departmental librarian, to ensure the preservation and availability of all departmental publications.
7. the materials manager, respecting the acquisition and disposal of materials for the records management function.
8. the accommodation manager, concerning the establishment and maintenance of records offices and mail rooms, and other space requirements of the records management function.
9. managers of micrographics, word processing, directives, forms, library and information services functions to ensure that the total information needs of the department are met.



## **9. MONITORING RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

**The Records Management Branch, on behalf of the Public Records Committee and in consultation with the Provincial Archives, shall audit at least once every five years the records management function of each Government department to determine compliance with records management policies, procedures, directives and disposition authorities.**

In addition to the external audit, it is important that the records management function be reviewed periodically from within the department. It is therefore recommended that the records management staff in each department, in consultation with officials and other personnel of the department, conduct annual evaluations of the records management function.

Although each department is to rely on its own resources in managing its records, from time to time a department may wish to seek advice from outside the department on some aspect of its records management function. In these circumstances the public records officer should consult the Records Management Branch or the Provincial Archives. If the Records Management Branch cannot provide the advice required, it will work with the department in developing specifications for the contracting of advice from other sources.



## APPENDIX I

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, SUPPLY AND SERVICES ACT

#### CHAPTER D-25.5 1983

##### Records Management

21(1) In this section, "department," without limiting section 1(c), includes

(a) any corporation, commission, board or other body empowered to exercise judicial or quasi-judicial or governmental functions and whose members are appointed by an Act of the Legislature, the Lieutenant Governor in Council or a Minister of the Crown, or any combination thereof, and

(b) any court established by the Legislature.

(2) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations

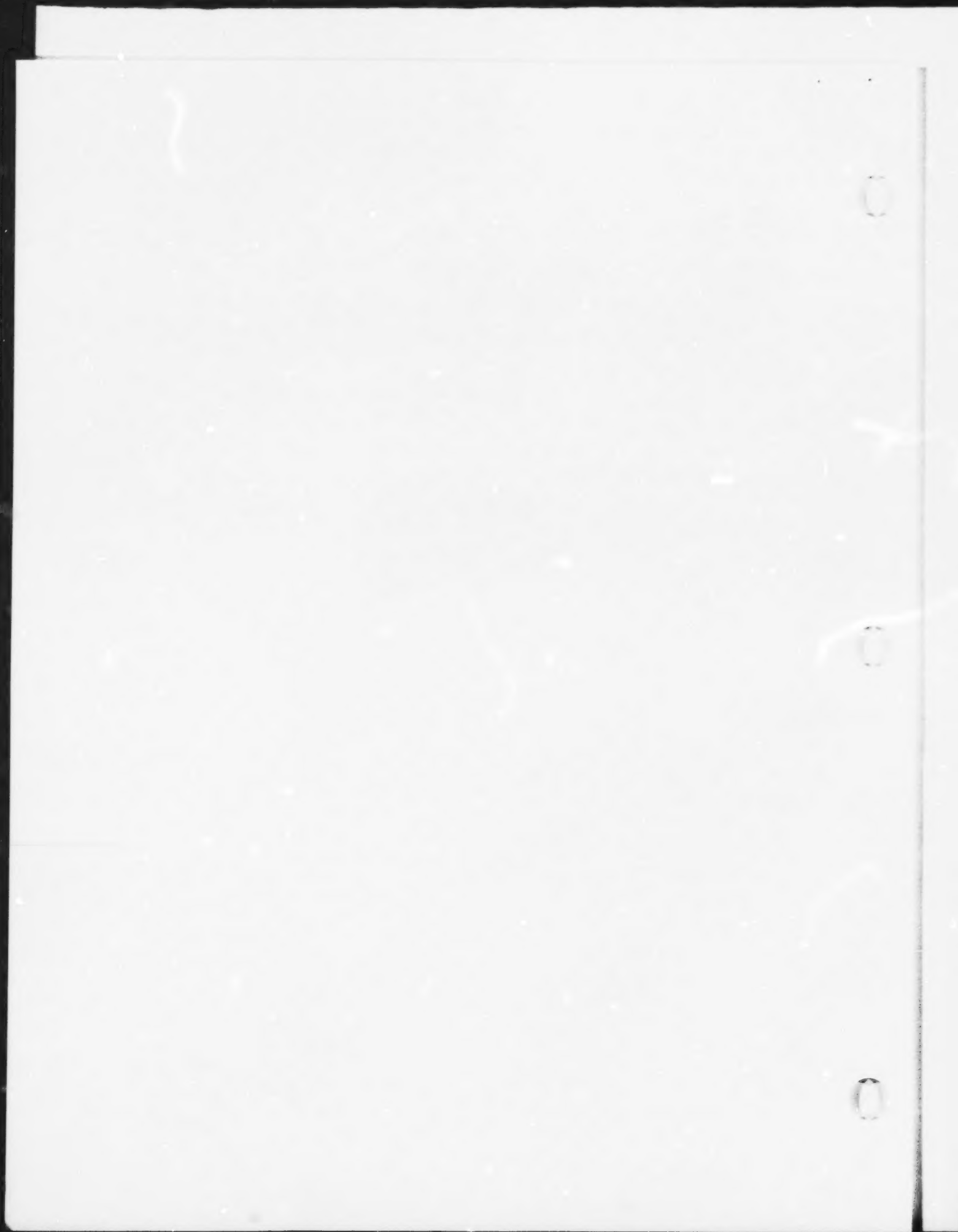
(a) governing the handling, control, organization, retention, maintenance, preservation, disposition, alienation and destruction of public records, including their transfer to the Provincial Archives of Alberta;

(b) establishing or governing the establishment of programs for any matter referred to in clause (a), including interdepartmental structures for implementing the programs;

(c) prohibiting or restricting or governing the prohibition or restriction of access to public records;

(d) defining an classifying public records;

(e) prescribing the departments, public records or classes of public records to which the regulations or any provisions thereof apply.



## APPENDIX II

### ALBERTA REGULATION 373/83

#### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, SUPPLY AND SERVICES ACT

##### Public Records Regulation

1 In this regulation

- (a) "committee" means the Public Records Committee;
- (b) "department" has the same meaning as in section 21(1) of the Act but does not include the Legislative Assembly Office;
- (c) "public records" means all documents, parchments, manuscripts, records, books, maps, plans, photographs, machine readable records or other documentary materials regardless of physical form owned by and in the possession of a department;
- (d) "public records management program" means an inter-departmental program instituted to provide efficient handling of public records by establishing controls for the organization, maintenance and disposition of public records.

AR 373/83; 146/84

2 There is hereby established a committee to be known as the Public Records Committee that shall consist of

- (a) the Deputy Minister, or a person designated by the Minister to act in the place of the Deputy Minister, who shall be the chairman,
- (b) a representative of the Attorney General, who shall be the vice-chairman,
- (c) the Provincial Archivist, who shall be the secretary,
- (d) a representative of the Provincial Treasurer, and
- (e) any other members of the public service appointed by the Minister.

AR 373/83

3 The committee may establish disposition schedules, procedures and directives governing

(a) the handling, control, organization, retention, maintenance, preservation, disposition, alienation, and destruction of public records;

(b) access to public records;

(c) the destruction of a public record that is no longer required for any purpose.

AR 373/83

4(1) A public record in the possession of a department shall be dealt with by the department in accordance with the disposition schedules and procedure established by the committee.

(2) Each department shall appoint an employee of the department to act as a public records officer and to be responsible for public records management within that department.

AR 373/83

5(1) Every public record in the possession of a department shall be preserved by that department until authority is given by the committee for its disposition.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), a department may, if it maintains a master file of its public records, dispose of superfluous copies of the following classes of public records:

(a) a calculation or draft made in preparing a document after the document has been completed.

(b) a printer's proof, made in preparing a printed document, after the publication of the printed document;

(c) a duplicate or extra copy of a document, if nothing has been altered, added or deleted since it was made;

(d) a superseded directive or instruction received, after the required action has been taken on the directive or instruction is no longer in effect and a copy is kept by the sender;

(e) a letter or memo on a subject matter that is ephemeral and of no lasting importance

(i) asking for comments, after the comment is received,

(ii) asking for information, after the information is received, or

(iii) having no purpose but the transmission of an enclosed document or the acknowledgement of the transmission.

AR 373/83

6 When the destruction of a public record is ordered by the committee, it shall be destroyed under the direction of a representative of the Department who shall, after the destruction of the public record, sign a certificate in duplicate indicating that he is satisfied that the public record was destroyed, if he is so satisfied.

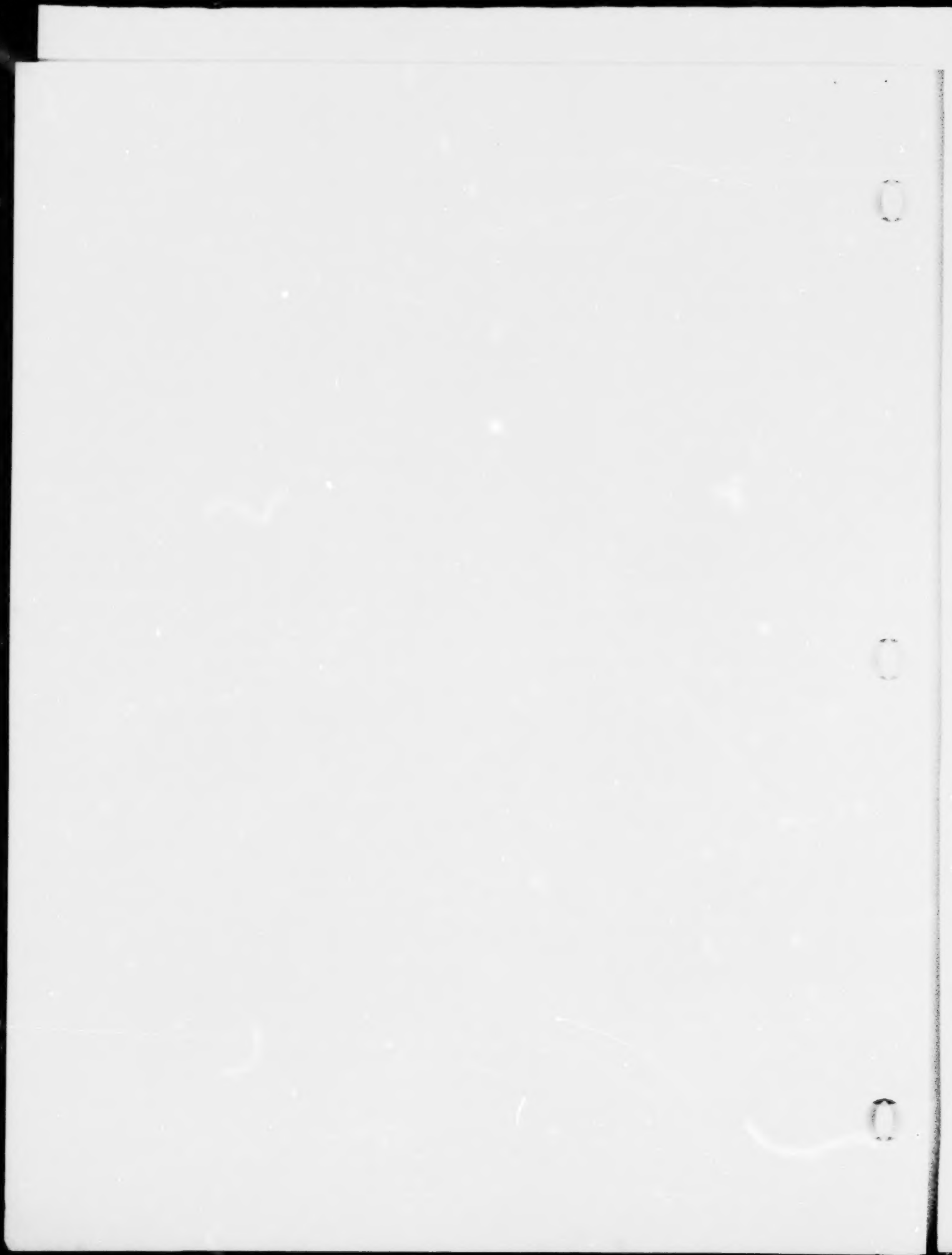
AR 373/83

7 The Minister is responsible for the preparation and implementation of a public records management program.

AR 373/83

8 The Public Records Regulations (Alta. Reg. 283/74) are repeated.

AR 373/83



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